



## Public Support for and Concerns about Utah's Core Standards

In response to concerns expressed in the 2012 general session of the Utah Legislature, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) committed to field questions and solicit additional public opinion on Utah Core Standards. On the evening of April 26 a public hearing was held at the Granite School District Board Room with more than 200 people in attendance. During the two-hour hearing 60 people expressed their opinions on Utah's Core Standards. In the week leading up to the public hearing and for the weekend following, USOE also solicited opinions and questions both electronically and through the mail. USBE and USOE received a total of 579 comments from 364 individuals including the 50 live comments. Most of the comments supporting the standards came from self-identified educators and most of the concerns raised about the standards came from self-identified parents.

### Comments and Questions in Support of Utah's Core Standards

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Here are some of the main questions and comments raised in support of Utah's Core Standards:

Question/Comment	Response
Support was expressed for the rigor, complexity, depth, ease of use and sequence of the standards.	One of USBE's primary goals in adopting the standards in language arts and math was to add rigor and depth to the core curriculum.
Some liked that the standards are research based.	One of the benefits of collaborating with other states is the ability to use standards that have been tested.
Others noted that the standards met the definition of "college and career ready."	This again points to USBE's push for more rigor.
Appreciation was expressed for "real world" applications within the standards	USBE/USOE concur.
Positive comments were directed at the increased use of informational texts and on problem solving.	USBE/USOE concur.
Some educators pointed to anecdotal evidence of improved student achievement after having used the standards.	USBE/USOE will monitor the data to determine the validity of the anecdotes.
With ever-increasing student mobility rates, some commented on the benefit of having the language arts and math standards cross state lines.	USBE/USOE concur.



Anecdotal evidence from teachers indicates standards may improve classroom teaching.	USBE/USOE will monitor the data to determine the validity of the anecdotes.
Some educators reported positive feedback from parents whose children used the new standards.	USBE/USOE are pleased with this feedback.
Educators commented that the core standards led to more educator collaboration and interdisciplinary collaboration.	USBE/USOE are pleased with this feedback.
Some educators commented on savings by making efficient use of other states' work through a grassroots movement.	USBE/USOE continue to use all means available to make Utah's public education system the most cost-effective in the nation.
Others commended Utah for being part of the effort to develop these standards and the assessments that are being written.	USBE/USOE were involved to ensure Utah's needs were and are being met by the standards and assessments.
Some worried that Utah might be disadvantaged if it didn't participate in the Common Core.	Anecdotal evidence from Texas (a non-Common Core state) indicates worry from the business community there on the state's new math standards and how they measure up to the Common Core math standards.
Some commented that the standards were a reflection of current best practices in teaching.	USBE/USOE are pleased with this feedback.

## Concerns and Questions about Utah's Core Standards

Here are some of the main concerns and questions raised about Utah's Core Standards:

Question/Comment	Response
Concern was raised over a real or potential loss of state sovereignty in education.	USBE vetted and approved Utah's Core Standards and remains in full control of their content now and in the future.
Concern was raised over loss of local control.	As it is Constitutionally charged, USBE retains control of standards, but local boards and charter schools retain control of curriculum. There is no change in the general operation of schools under Utah's Core Standards.
Some expressed concern over a perceived loss of parental control.	The most recent additions to Utah's Core Standards in language arts and math are not legally different than any of the standards that have been in place and periodically updated since 1984. Parents retain control over the standards to the extent that they vote in Utah State Board of Education elections.



Others were concerned about a perceived lack of public input on the new standards and that they were adopted too quickly.	The standards were first discussed in a May 14, 2009 USBE meeting; discussed at a June 17, 2009 Education Interim Committee meeting at the Legislature; discussed in public meetings held throughout the state between July – December 2009; given USBE preliminary approval in a board meeting on June 4, 2010 and adopted by USBE on Aug. 6, 2010, which provided an extra month of public input than is normally given between preliminary and final approval. There was local media coverage of the standards in the <i>Salt Lake Tribune</i> , <i>Deseret News</i> , Associated Press, (Ogden) <i>Standard-Examiner</i> , (Provo) <i>Daily Herald</i> , (Logan) <i>Herald Journal</i> , <i>Salt Lake City Weekly</i> , KSL, and KCPW.
Some fear there are federal strings that go along with adopting the Common Core.	There is no money attached directly to the Common Core. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) did offer funding to two state consortia to develop assessments based upon the Common Core. ED also saw participation in the Common Core as a favorable point in determining grant money from the Race to the Top program. Utah applied in the first round of Race to the Top, but was not funded. Utah has since declined to participate in the program. There is no federal penalty for withdrawing from the Common Core.
Concerns were raised over individual student data being shared with the federal government.	Student demographic and assessment data has long been shared as part of the accountability process; it's how states gauge their performance and the performance of demographic subgroups against each other and national norms. Individually-identifiable student record information, however, remains off limits.
Concerns were also raised over Utah's participation in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).	Utah joined and co-chaired the executive committee of SBAC to ensure that Utah's needs and wants were met in the creation of the assessments. Utah is now in a position to let out an RFP on assessments, so it has withdrawn from active participation in SBAC.



Some alleged that the State Superintendent had a conflict of interest involved in adopting Utah's Core Standards.	The Superintendent has no conflict of interest and receives no personal benefit whether or not Utah participates in the Common Core.
Concerns were expressed over the cost of adopting the new standards including the cost of new textbooks.	Implementation of Utah's new core standards in language arts and math is no more costly than any other previous update of standards.
Some parents were concerned the integrated math standards were problematic	Integrated math has long been the standard for math in elementary grades in Utah. There are very few changes in the integrated math portion of the new standards.
Some were concerned about a new focus on informational texts in language arts.	Informational texts comprise a large portion of what adults read now and the trend seems likely to continue in the future. Students must be prepared to read such texts. Students will continue to study great literature (e.g., Shakespeare, Twain, Steinbeck) in addition to informational texts.
Concerns were raised about the use of argumentative writing.	Argumentative writing is a piece of critical thinking skills that are being taught to help students prepare for college and careers.
Some were concerned that the new standards would limit options for accelerated students.	The new standards will not hold back students any more than the old standards did. Funding for accelerated programs is more likely to be the problem.
There were questions about the effect the standards would have on home school children.	Only Utah public schools are required to use Utah's Core Standards.